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Chief, Geography Division

25 September 1957

THRU : Assistant Director for Research and Reports

Chief, Geographic Area

Review of CIA/RR G-18, Novaya Zemlya

1. Several days ago, when you queried me about the status of the review of Novaya Zemlya, I informed you that I had written a memorandum on the report expressing my views. This memorandum, which you asked for and later thermofaxed, is no longer valid because I find some of the views expressed were of preliminary character and have changed after further consideration of the relationship of Novaya Zemlya to the over-all USSR strategy.

2. The report is a good compilation of detailed data from a number of secondary sources. There is an ample supply of photographs. The report appears to be very carefully organized and written and attests to painstaking effort on the part of the author.

3. The author appears to have brought together all of the detailed information available to the report and to have organized it in such a way that several concepts are left with the reader. Although these concepts result from the interpretation of geographic, military, scientific and economic associations, they do not answer for the reader the question of the significance of Novaya Zemlya to the U.S.S.R.

4. I suggest the utilization of much of the applicable material presented in the first fifteen pages of the report -- and including material from the summary and introduction, as well as pertinent selected items from the remainder -- to form a nucleus for one report which would analyze the significance of the Arctic island groups to the U.S.S.R. Much of the detailed material, the collection and understanding of which would be pertinent to the research process, would not appear in the report itself.

5. I shall be glad to work with you on the development of the organization of the new report suggested in paragraph 4, above. Therefore, I cannot approve of the publication of the report in its present form.

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Enclosure:

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Ch/G's copy

THROUGH:

Chief, Geography Division
Chief, Geographic Research Area

1 October 1957

Assistant Director for Research and Reports

Draft CIA/RR G-18, Novaya Zemlya

REFERENCE:

Memorandum for Ch/D/CG from Ch/G, 25 September 1957

1. After his initial review of the subject draft, [REDACTED] asked for my reactions to the report itself and to his preliminary evaluation of it. I personally felt that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate the strategic role played by Novaya Zemlya in a meaningful way because of it being such a small segment in the much larger area involved in possible Soviet strategic concepts.

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2. Subsequent to our conversation and after considerable further thought, Jim has prepared the referenced memorandum which I now have before me. I agree with his evaluation of the report as it stands and also appreciate the great deal of care taken in its preparation. At the same time, I also concur in his subsequent suggestions and decision.

3. The reorientation in approach proposed by Jim is, in my mind, particularly important since it could be profitably applied in consideration of other future geographic intelligence reports of this general type -- not related to operational support. For this reason I should like to expand a little on my thinking in respect to the proposed new approach. In my mind, a more meaningful and useful geographic intelligence report would result from an analysis of the Soviet Arctic island groups as a whole, this analysis to stress only those aspects of the islands which have some clear bearing on why these islands are important to Soviet scientific, military, and economic developments. To give such a report focus, the importance or significance of the analyses should be interpreted in terms of a major problem. I suggest that the responsible analysts, armed with all available knowledge of possible Soviet strategy (SNIE 11-6-57, "Gross Capabilities for Attack on the US in Mid-1960," as a starter), could examine the facts in relation to broad strategic concepts and attempt to portray the actual and potential significance and use of these Arctic islands by the Soviets as an element in their strategic planning.

SUBJECT: Draft CIA/RR G-18, Novaya Zemlya

4. As the report now stands it is a careful, straightforward analysis of known data on the islands (largely from secondary sources), so organized as to give some priority attention to military use and limitations in that use. In addition, there is a rather full description of known civilian activities normal to life in Novaya Zemlya. Unfortunately much of this part of the report is, of necessity I presume, out of date and replete with photographs which probably do not properly reflect current developments. More importantly, in a report which is not intended to support operational activities, the detail of normal living by and of itself has little intelligence significance since I cannot see how this information could influence or help in the study of Soviet intentions or in US planning.

5. Admittedly, the change in focus and content proposed is a real challenge in trying again to determine the extent to which the geographic approach can be utilized in contributing to broad problems facing the intelligence community. I feel that here may be such an opportunity, and, if successful, we can look forward to occasional reports of this type being added to the long list of other studies that have given the Geography Division such a fine reputation within the intelligence community.

6. I am sure Jim, as well as I, would appreciate obtaining from you the considered views of your staff and branch chiefs on the approach suggested in Jim's and my memoranda, because full appreciation by your people of the concept incorporated in our remarks is necessary to the formulation of possible future reports of this nature.

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OTTO E. GUTHE

Distribution:

Orig. and 1 - Addressee
1 - Ch/G/RR
2 - AD/RR

OAD/RR:OEGuthe:amm/2817 (30 September 1957)